



# **Civic Tech Hackathon Manual**

## What is the Civic Tech Hackathon?

The Civic Tech Hackathon is an event that encourages students of all disciplines to participate in a 24 hour ideation, implementation, and presentation venture to bring to life a technological solution for public interest. This hackathon brings together students from across the country, creating a thinking tank for solutions to global issues.

Day 1 of the hackathon introduces participants to Tech for Change and the definition of Public Interest Technology. The students will find their teams early on and begin hacking, working with peers from many disciplines and many regions of the country! This day is filled with workshops, both professional and recreational, to enthuse and engage students for the duration of the event. We offer students 3 meals, a place for them to sleep in the evening and lots of work spaces! On Day 2, the students will submit their team projects in the morning and have a tech exhibition to present their projects. During this time judges and their hackathon peers will come around to inquire and discover more about their work.

The Civic Tech Hackathon is an exciting opportunity to not only participate as an attendee, but to also create, apart of the organizing team. This manual will discuss how to be an effective Project Manager, how to organize your team, detailed explanations for all the processes completed by each team, give an example agenda and share an example planning template for the Civic Tech Hackathon. In conclusion, this guide will conclude with key takeaways from our initial experience.

## The Project Manager's Commitment

A Project manager for the Civic Tech Hackathon by Tech For Change makes it a priority to assemble a team of Black and Latino college students to create this event. Hackathons are a great place to grow students' tech skills through actual implementation and increase one's professional network. The project manager understands that hackathons are a predominantly white space and seeks to expand this amazing opportunity to underrepresented minorities. In order to make hackathons feel more welcoming to students of color, the team organizing the event needs to be able to relate and specifically curate themes and project prompts that recognize the unique circumstances of these students. Therefore, although the Tech For Change's Civic Tech Hackathon welcomes students' of all backgrounds to participate and encourages a diverse gathering of individuals, the project manager makes a commitment to hire Black and Latino organizing staff.

In addition, the project manager oversees all hackathon team staff and delegates responsibilities based on their vision for the hackathon. Their vision is what guides the team and they should always make sure that the team is progressing week to week on all tasks.

## Organizing your Team

The better a hackathon team is organized, the better the outcome of the hackathon. The hackathon consists of 3 teams:

- **Operations Team:** Focuses on day of event execution and programming such as workshops to engage students for the duration of the event and presentations for ceremonies
- **Marketing Team:** In charge of outreach and marketing the hackathon on social media. Also keep registered students up to date on all things hackathon and communicate travel stipend awards
- **Logistics Team:** Plan all the behind the scenes work. Books rooms, hires event and conferences to get food and security

To have a functioning team the hackathon should hire a leader for each of the teams and then delegate the tasks for each team. The Project Manager oversees all teams and is in charge of the event's effective planning.

# Operations Team

## Operations Team Responsibilities

- ❖ Agenda Creation
  - You are responsible for creating the agenda
  - Layout workshops, sessions, as well as the judging, mentoring, and registration processes
  - You will also be responsible for creating presentations and presenting them during the various workshops and session
  - This will additionally require strong communication with the logistics and finance teams to ensure you have the right materials for the activities to run smoothly
  - You can find a sample agenda below
- ❖ Workshop Creation
  - Come up with different Workshops ideas (Technical Skills/Informational/Recreational)
  - Reaching out to mentors who could teach workshops
  - Creation of slideshows/presentations
  - Direct people to different Workshops
  - Attend and oversee the success of workshops
- ❖ Oversee Sessions
  - Morning Session
    - Create and present an introductory presentation welcoming hackers and describing the goals of civic tech
    - Introduce keynote speaker
    - Set guidelines for the day
    - Tidbits of where to find resources throughout the day
  - Evening Session
    - Remind hackathon members of important rules and regulations pertaining to Hackathon such as sleeping arrangements, which rooms are allowed to be occupied during the night, the night and the next day's schedule, and project submission deadlines and information
    - Activity to keep hackathon members engaged
    - Any other needed announcements
- ❖ Registration
  - Making sure Hackathon members are registered at the beginning of the day
  - Direct hackers to space where opening session will be held
  - Create form for teams to register their team name and project path
  - Create Discord server for participants to communicate and to share key information
- ❖ Project Presentations
  - Create template presentation for students
  - Create Rubric for Judges
  - Created an organized way to assign Judges to groups

# Marketing Team

## Marketing Team Responsibilities

- ❖ Familiarizing yourself with the google drive so that you know where to find information when needed. Constantly update google sheets with pertinent information.
- ❖ Creating merchandise for the Civic Tech Hackathon Team and participants.
  - Collaboration with the Finance Team to ensure the order is ordered in time of the hackathon.
  - Making sure that the material of any clothing (e.g. shirts or sweatshirts) are comfortable. You can order a batch on Custom Ink of blank shirts.
- ❖ Creating Flyers
  - Flyers to advertise the Hackathon with relevant information like time, place, website, description of the event and a qr code linked to the application.
  - Ensure flyers do not have typos and the QR code works.
- ❖ Advertising The Civic Tech Hackathon
  - Reaching out to PIT-UN and non PIT-UN clubs, Hack4Impact Chapters, local undergrad universities in Boston, and BU clubs and department via email and/or instagram dm's to spread awareness of the event. Encourage them to repost the flier on their stories. Most of this information can be found on the "Hackathon PIT-UN Outreach" excel sheet in the google drive.
  - Reaching out to professors on campus that teach classes about civic tech, social justice/policy, data science, computer programming, etc.
  - Reaching out to department heads and encouraging them to spread word about the event via professors, department wide emailing to students, and newsletters.
  - Hanging up physical posters around campus. Put these up weeks before the application closes. There is an option to print large posters with Fedex.
  - Sending fliers to the digital signage around campus.
- ❖ Emails
  - You will be responsible for emailing clubs/departments to advertise the event and answer any questions they may have.
  - You will be responsible for emailing mentors for the hackathon and sending them a calendar invite far in advance.
  - You will be responsible for emailing applicants about the status of their application and answering any related questions.
  - Respond to these emails promptly. Ideally in under 24 hours. It is efficient to keep a running list of general responses or scripts to facilitate timely responding.
- ❖ Registration
  - You will be responsible for making sure an applicant and mentor are properly registered for the hackathon. These responsibilities include:

- Emailing an applicant the status of their application with steps to complete necessary forms like a liability waiver and a photo release form.
- Sending a follow up email with information about how to prepare for the hackathon. Examples could include what to bring and a redirection to the website.
- Responding to applicants and mentors' questions, comments, or concerns.
- Compiling an excel/google sheet of registered individuals that will be used to check in mentors and participants on the day of the hackathon.
- Send out reminder emails to mentors and participants.

❖ Social Media

- You will be responsible for creating and running the instagram account for your chapter, where you will post relevant information about Tech For Change like an emphasis on Tech For Change's mission.
- Use this account to get participants excited about the hackathon. Examples can include but are not limited to an instagram story that allows students to ask any questions they may have about the event. Or posting pictures from the past event.
- Use this account to establish connections with other clubs and organizations with similar missions as Tech For Change.

## Logistics Team:

### Logistic Team's Responsibilities

- ❖ Reserving Space for the Hackathon
  - You will be responsible for reserving the room spaces for the Hackathon. It is essential to book the spaces as soon as possible, so there are no reservation conflicts.
  - You will create a plan and decide which floors and rooms will be used for the hackathon based on the agenda.
  - You will be responsible for creating a spreadsheet of the floors and rooms that you have booked.
  - You will be responsible for assigning agenda items and workshops to their respective room and/or floor on the spreadsheet.
  - Make sure to communicate effectively with the individuals that you email.
  - Do not be afraid to send follow up emails if they do not respond, as this is an important part of the hackathon and must be completed early.
  - You must review your plan with the Project Manager and other pertinent members of the team.
  - You are responsible for checking each reserved space/room to see if there's anything that's needed or required.
  - You will have complimentary access to any tech equipment in the reserved spaces since Tech For Change is an internal BU group.
  - If you require any extra electricity or wifi, discuss with Events and Conferences.
  
- ❖ Workings With Events and Conferences
  - Events and Conferences will be your best friend and it is important to have a good relationship with them.
  - You will be responsible for having an intake meeting with E & C, where you will describe all the necessary elements you need for the Hackathon.
  - Afterwards, you will receive a cost estimate from E & C and you will be responsible for keeping the costs under budget and for checking if the information is accurate.
  - You will be responsible for planning the food and catering.
  - Discuss food catering early on and make sure to order enough healthy options for participants. Also, use statistics from the application to accommodate dietary restrictions. Make sure the food costs do not exceed the budget.
  - You will be responsible for providing a food quantity estimate. It is extremely common to run out when you order for the exact number of participants and so it is suggested that you order a slightly larger quantity of food than we require to account for unforeseen circumstances and larger appetites. For example, coffee is absolutely necessary and should be provided throughout the entire hackathon, especially overnight.



- You will be responsible for acquiring security (BUPD) since the hackathon is overnight and is required by BU. Discuss the prices with Events and Conferences.
- It's recommended to have a zoom or in-person meeting with Events and Conferences about these topics, as emails might hinder the speed of the process and contribute to misunderstandings.
- A few of the essential items that you will need will be listed below. Some might be already available in the booked spaces, but communicate with Events and Conferences about them and other necessary items. Learning & Event Technology Services (LETS) and BU Spark! can also help getting some of these items. There should be a materials document/spreadsheet for these items as well.
  - Podium
  - Tables & Chairs
  - Speakers
  - Mics
  - Internet Stability/ Wifi Boosted
  - Extension Cords & Outlets
  - Air Mattresses
  - Photographer
- ❖ Devpost, MLH, and Application
  - You will be responsible for the hackathon application and DevPost.
  - Create a hackathon application for the participants using Google Forms. Use the previous year's application as a template and make sure to have the necessary information needed to book flights for participants who will need travel assistance.
  - Create a DevPost for the hackathon. Add a theme and images. Main description should be along the lines of looking for technical students interested in public interest projects and expand on this with pertinent details. Use previous year's as a template and incorporate language from the brand guide. Make sure to post the date and tagline.
  - Put in effort to get support from MLH.
- ❖ Other
  - Create a list of items that participants should bring to the hackathon such as their laptops, toothbrushes, blankets, etc.
  - Create a directions flyer that will help participants get from the airport to the hackathon. Use the previous years' flyers as templates and make it clear and concise.
  - Source anything that'll be needed for entertainment such as VR games, Nintendo Switches, cards etc.

## Finance Chair:

The responsibilities of the finance chair/co-chairs is to maintain and create the budget for the entire hackathon. Mainly the role consists of allocating money towards buying the food, travel methods, merchandise, and utilities. This of course is up to the discretion of the future chair(s) what categories are needed to fulfill all purchases that must be made for the hackathon. Also, the future finance chairs should be flexible. The finance chairs will have to work with the current finance representative for Spark! as well as possibly the project manager for Spark! Email will be very important so please remain vigilant in your email and stay open to communication and feedback.

# Example Hackathon Agenda

## Day 1

- 9:00 AM **17th Floor** Registration
- 10:00 AM **17th Floor Conference Room** Opening session
- 11:00 AM **17th Floor Conference Room** Breakout session
- **Team formation session!**
    - Meet with group
    - Start developing/planning
    - Each team has a mentor who will meet with the at their team
    - **Hacking begins**

12:00PM - 2:00PM **17th Floor Conference Room** Lunch

### 1:00PM Developing + Workshops

- Professional Development Workshops (4) – 1hr sessions
  - Room 265** 1:00 - 2:00 Resume Workshop
  - Room 164** 2:00 - 3:00 AI/ML Workshop
  - Room 265** 3:00 - 4:00 Tech +DEI Workshop
  - Room 264** 4:00 - 5:00 Agile Management
  - Room 265** 5:00 - 6:00 Git Workshop
  - Room 264** 6:00 - 7:00 Civic Engagement Workshop
- Recreational Activities (2) – 1hr sessions
  - Room 262** 1:00 - 2:00 Yoga
  - Room 262** 6:00 - 7:00 STEP Dance Workshop

8:00 - 9:00 PM **17th Floor Conference Room** Evening Session

7:00 - 9:00 PM **17th Floor Conference Room** Dinner

9:00 - 11:00 PM **Team Tournaments**

- **Room 164** 9:00 - 11:00 Academic bowl / Jeopardy
- **Room 262** 9:00 - 11:00 Minute to win it

11:30 PM **Sleeping spaces opens**

**Room 262** - Females

**Room 265** - Males

**Room 264** - Co-Ed

## Day 2

12:00 AM **SPARK!** Midnight Snacks + Karaoke

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM **17th Floor Conference Room** Breakfast

**9:00 AM** **Project Submission Deadline**

**10:30AM** **Presentation Deadline**

10:30 -12:00 PM **17th Floor Conference Room** Tech Exhibition

12:00PM -1:30PM **17th Floor Conference Room** Lunch

2:00PM - 3:00PM **17th Floor Conference Room** Closing Ceremony + Demonstrations of winning projects (7 [5 minutes to present, 2 minutes of questions] min per team)

## Preparation Guide with Example Timeline on Trello

[Please find the preparation guide here on Trello.](#)

### Key Takeaways

1. Adding a Fundraising Chair to gain more funding and company sponsors
2. Create contract for the team to agree upon before starting work
3. Play music during hack time. Students enjoy ambience!
4. Pitch Civic Tech Hackathon to media outlets in advance
5. Less frequent non-tech workshops
6. Professional workshops oriented toward pertinent knowledge for projects